

2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee

Summary of Meeting on January 24, 2017

Meeting Objective

The objective for the second meeting of the 2017 Accountability Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) was to make recommendations on targets for the 2017 accountability system, consider adjustments to methodology used to determine campus comparison groups, and continue discussing the implementation of the A–F accountability system.

2017 Accountability System

Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff reminded committee members that 2017 will be the final year of the current index system, and, as such, very few changes are expected to be made.

While the design of the accountability system is expected to remain stable, agency staff explained that changes to the online testing platform will likely affect the composition of Index 3 and Index 4. Specifically, STAAR L and STAAR A are no longer separate test forms from STAAR but rather accommodations that accompany an online STAAR. The Consolidated Accountability File (CAF) prepared by the testing contractor will not distinguish which individualized test accommodations a student taking the online version has received. As a result, students who have linguistic accommodations when taking STAAR will be included in both Index 3 and Index 4. One committee member remarked that districts that have a higher proportion of these testers could be negat

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Several committee members voiced concerns with the industry certification component of the 2017–18 accountability system, noting that rural campuses and districts are at a significant disadvantage due to the absence of qualified instructors and limited access to these pathways. The commissioner informed the committee that the rural task force is attempting to mitigate these challenges with accessibility to postsecondary courses/pathways.

Domain I Methodology Considerations

The committee reviewed the Domain I methodology, expressing concerns with weighting each performance level equally. The majority of members preferred a greater weighting for the passing standard and less emphasis on the advanced standard, reiterating that the advanced standard is not required by statute. Ultimately, 11 members voted for altering the Domain I methodology, while only four members voted to keep it the same, although no specifics were offered as to what should be altered.

Domain III Methodology Considerations

While members favored the notion of accounting for the impact of poverty on academic achievement, they expressed a desire to also consider the intensity of poverty. Commissioner Morath agreed that this differentiation is significant but reminded members that the data available to the agency is limited to the percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunch. US Census data could add to our understanding of poverty, but not without student home addresses which TEA does not store or collect. One member suggested that the y-axis of student achievement in Domain III should logically top out at 60 since that is A-level performance in Domain I. Holding schools with a smaller percentage of economically disadvantaged students to a higher standard than that would be inconsistent. Other members suggested using the achievement of all students on STAAR, rather than only the economically disadvantaged students when establishing the cut points for Domain III. TEA staff noted that they had run modeling data using this methodology but that using all students as the independent variable masked poor performance for the economically disadvantaged subgroup in approximately 150 campuses.

Domain IV Methodology Considerations

TEA staff began the discussion by pointing out that Domain IV is the one about which TEA has received the most questions since the release of the December 30 legislative report. Staff recognized that there are details of the chronic absenteeism methodology (i.e., excused absences, unique medical situations, suspensions, and grade level inclusion) that create a need for the indicator to be refined if the construction of Domain IV remains for the 2017–18 accountability system. Members suggested using a climate survey, foreign language course participation, UIL participation, percentage of high school courses taken in middle school, or teacher retention rates as indicators rather than chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle schools. Multiple members expressed a desire to remove elementary schools from Domain IV altogether.

The committee reiterated the need for a minimum-size criterion for the numerator of the annual 7–8 dropout rate, noting that several middle schools received seemingly inaccurate Domain IV grades because one of their students was coded as a dropout. Applying a minimum

